Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session With the American Society of Newspapers Editors

April 11, 1997

The President. Thank you very much. And thank you, Bob, for reminding me of my best line from the speech last night [*Laughter*] George Bush got the last laugh. [*Laughter*] Twelve thousand feet, not a scratch. I fell 6 inches, I'm hobbled for 6 months. [*Laughter*]

I'm delighted to be here. I want to thank you for having me and congratulate this year's writing award winners. I missed last year, and I'm sorry I couldn't come, but the Vice President told me all about it. And because he came here, I had to listen one more time and look one more time at all those pictures from his days as a long-haired reporter for the National Tennessean. [*Laughter*]

This is what it's really like. I don't mind learning about global warming and high technology and everything, but I had to learn all about the newspaper business all over again. I hear that speech about once every 3 months from him. [*Laughter*]

You know, times have changed remarkably since Will Rogers said, ''All I know is what I see in the papers.'' Today, we live in a world with 500 channels, literally hundreds of thousands of web sites exploding all the time—we're trying to develop the Internet, too—but still, the role that you play in informing and educating Americans and in helping them to make the right kind of choices is terribly important.

I want to talk today about one of those choices that will have a profound effect on all of our lives and the lives of our children in the next century, and that is the choices we must make to sustain America's leadership in the world.

Four years ago I came into office determined to renew our strength and prosperity here at home. But I also believed that in the global society of the 21st century, the dividing line between foreign and domestic policy was increasingly an artificial distinction. After all, our national security depends on strong families, safe streets, and world-class education. And our success at home clearly depends on our strength and willingness and our ability to lead abroad.

The conviction that America must be strong and involved in the world has really been the bedrock of our foreign policy for the last 50 years. After World War II, a generation of farsighted leaders forged NATO, which has given us a half century of security and played a strong role in ending the cold war. They built the United Nations so that a hard-won peace would not be lost. They launched the Marshall plan to rebuild a Europe ravaged by war. They created the World Bank and other international financial institutions to pave the way for unprecedented prosperity for American people and others around the world. They did this throughout a half century, Republicans and Democrats together, united in bipartisan support for the American leadership that has been essential to the strength and security of the American people for half a century now.

Now we stand at the dawn of a new century and a new millennium—another moment to be farsighted, another moment to guarantee America another 50 years of security and prosperity. We've largely swept away the blocks and barriers that once divided whole continents. But as borders become more open and the flow of information, technology, money, trade, and people across the borders are larger and more rapid, the line between domestic and foreign policy continues to blur.

And we can only preserve our security and our well-being at home by being strongly involved in the world beyond our borders. From fighting terrorism and drug trafficking to limiting the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, to protecting the global environment, we stand to gain from working with other nations, and we will surely lose if we fail to do so.

Just as American leaders of both political parties did 50 years ago, we have to come together to take new initiatives and revitalize and reform old structures so that we can prepare our country to succeed and win and make the world a better place in this new era.

You know, it is commonplace to say that since the end of the cold war, America stands alone as the world's only superpower. That

is clearly true, but it can be dangerously misleading because our power can only be used if we are willing to become even more involved with others all around the world in an increasingly interdependent world. We must be willing to shape this interdependent world and to embrace its interdependence, including our interdependence on others. There is no illusory Olympus on which the world's only superpower can sit and expect to preserve its position, much less enhance it.

In my State of the Union Address, I set out six key strategic objectives for America's prosperity, security, and democratic values in the 21st century: first, a Europe that is undivided, democratic, and at peace for the first time in its history; second, strong and stable relations between the United States and Asia; third, our willing continuation of America's leadership as the world's most important force for peace; fourth, the creation of more jobs and opportunity for our people through a more open and competitive trading system that also helps others all around the world; fifth, increasing cooperation in confronting new security threats that defy borders and unilateral solutions; and, sixth, the provision of the tools necessary to meet these challenges from maintaining the world's strongest, most modern, and most adaptable military to maintaining a strong, fully funded, and comprehensive diplomacy.

On that last point, let me just point out that Secretary Albright often says that our whole diplomatic budget is only about one percent of the budget. We devote less of our resources to that than any other major country in the world and, yet, about half of America's legacy will be determined by whether we have the adequate resources to do that. That's a very important thing, because I think most of your readers don't know that. They think we spend more and get less out of our foreign policy investments when, in fact, we spend less and get more than almost any other area of public endeavor.

Each of these six goals is vital to realizing the promise of our time and to guarding against its perils. Together, they provide a blueprint for our future, not just for the next 4 years but for the next half-century.

In the next 3 months we'll face critical choices that will determine whether we have the vision and will to pursue these objectives. We have to seize the opportunity to complete the mission America set out on 50 years ago and to push forward on the mission of the next 50 years.

We will begin by strengthening the foundation for security and prosperity in our own hemisphere. In the first of my three trips to the Americas over the next year, I will meet with our closest neighbors in Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean to help our democracies and economies grow together and to intensify our shared fight against crime, drugs, illegal immigration, and pollution.

Just before the 50th anniversary of the Marshall Plan, I will hold a summit with the European Union to affirm our transatlantic ties even as we expand our global partnership.

I will host the world's leading industrial democracies at what we used to call the G–7 but now call the Summit of the Eight in Denver, which will give us an opportunity to deepen our cooperation with Russia for peace and freedom and prosperity.

At the NATO summit in Madrid this July, we will continue to adapt NATO to the demands of a new era and invite the first, but not the last new members to join history's most successful alliance.

And I will continue America's efforts to bring the parties together at this very difficult moment for peace in the Middle East.

Like the larger agenda they support, each of these initiatives calls for American leadership that is strong and steadfast. The powerful trend toward democracy and free markets is neither inevitable nor irreversible. Sustaining it will take relentless effort. But leadership brings its rewards. The more America leads, the more willing others will be to share the risks and the responsibilities of forging the future we want.

In the last 4 years, we have seen that over and over again. We've seen it in Bosnia. We've seen it in Haiti. We've seen it in the Summit of the Americas and in the APEC leaders forum, where we have agreed with our partners to build a free and open trading system early in the next century.

Our leadership also faces two other pressing tests now and in the coming months: first, immediately ratifying the Chemical Weapons Convention; and then, giving the United States the means we need to continue our growth by making trade more open and fair in the global economy.

Let me deal with the first issue. For the last 50 years, Americans have lived under the hair-trigger threat of mass destruction. Our leadership has been essential to lifting that global peril, thanks in large measure to the efforts of my predecessors, and during the last 4 years also when we have made remarkable progress.

The collapse of the Soviet Union left 3,400 nuclear warheads in Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and Belarus. Today, there are none. North Korea was accumulating material for nuclear weapons when I became President. Now its nuclear program is frozen, under international supervision, and eventually will be dismantled.

We helped to win the indefinite extension of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, a powerful global barrier to the spread of nuclear weapons and their technology. We led in concluding the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, which will bring to life a decades-old dream of ending nuclear weapons testing. President Yeltsin and I agreed in Helsinki to a roadmap through the START treaties to cut our nuclear arsenals over the next decade by 80 percent from their cold war peaks and actually to destroy the warheads so they can never be used for destructive ends.

Now America must rise to the challenge of ratifying the Chemical Weapons Convention and doing it before it takes effect on April 29th, less than 3 weeks from today.

This century opened with the horror of chemical warfare in the trenches of World War I. Today, at the dawn of a new century, we have the opportunity to forge a widening international commitment to begin banishing poison gas from the Earth, even as we know it remains a grave, grave threat in the hands of rogue states or terrorist groups.

The Chemical Weapons Convention requires other nations to do what we decided to do more than a decade ago—get rid of all chemical weapons. In other words, the treaty is about other nations destroying their chemical weapons. As they do so and renounce the development, production, acquisition, or use of chemical arms, and pledge not to help others acquire them or produce them, our troops will be less likely to face one of the battlefield's most lethal threats. As stockpiles are eliminated and the transfer of dangerous chemicals is controlled, rogue states and terrorists will have a harder time getting the ingredients for weapons. And that will protect not only military forces but also innocent civilians.

By giving us new tools for verification, enabling us to tap a global network for intelligence and information, and strengthening our own law enforcement, the treaty will make it easier for us to prevent and to punish those who seek to violate its rules.

The Chemical Weapons Convention reflects the best of American bipartisanship, negotiated under President Reagan and President Bush, supported by a broad and growing number of Americans, including every chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff since the Carter administration. Last week at the White House, I was proud to welcome a remarkable cross-section of these supporters, including former Secretary of State James Baker, General Colin Powell, other military leaders, legislators, arms control experts, and representatives from small and large businesses, religious groups, and scientists.

I urge the Senate to do what is right and ratify this convention. If we fail to do it, we won't be there to enforce a treaty that we helped to write, leaving our military and our people more vulnerable to a silent and sudden killer. We will put ourselves in the same column with rogue nations like Libya and Iraq that reject this treaty, instead of in the company of those that set the norms for civilized behavior in this world. We will subject our chemical companies, among our leading exporters, to severe trade restrictions that could cost them hundreds of millions of dollars in sales, and cost many Americans good jobs. And perhaps most important, we will send a clear signal of retreat to the rest of the world at the very time when we ought to be sending the opposite signal.

America has led the effort to establish an international ban against chemical weapons.

Now we have to ratify it and remain on the right side of history. If we do, there will be new momentum and moral authority to our leadership in reducing even more the dangers of weapons of mass destruction.

Within my lifetime we've made enormous strides. Stepping back from the nuclear precipice, from the bleak time of fallout shelters and air-raid drills. But we have so much more to do. We have to strengthen the world's ability to stop the use of deadly diseases as biological weapons of war. We have to freeze the production of raw materials used for nuclear bombs. We must give greater bite to the global watchdogs responsible for detecting hidden weapons systems and programs. Continuing this progress demands constant work, nonstop vigilance, and American leadership.

There is a second matter that demands bipartisan cooperation in the coming months. For 50 years, our Nation has led the world not only in building security but in promoting global prosperity. Now we have to choose whether to continue to shape the international economy so that it works for all our people or to shrink from its challenges. The rapidly growing and ever-changing global economy is an inescapable fact of our time. In the last 50 years, global trade has increased 90 fold. Over the next decade, it is expected to grow at 3 times the rate of the American economy. Nations once divided by great gulfs of geography and military rivalry are now linked by surging currents of commerce.

Now, the world marketplace does pose stiff challenges. But it offers us great opportunity. In each of the last 3 years, the United States has been ranked the world's most competitive economy. Our exports have surged to record levels, our budget deficit is now the smallest as a share of national income of any major economy in the world, basic industries have revived, our auto industry is number one in the world again for the first time since the 1970's. From semiconductors to biotech, to Hollywood, American firms lead the industries that are remaking the world. Our economy produced 11½ million jobs in the last 4 years for the first time ever. Our unemployment today is 5.2 percent; that's 1½ percent lower than the 25-year average before I took office.

We can make the most of this new economic era. We do not need to be afraid of global trade. But in a world where we have only 4 percent of the population and where the fastest growing markets for our products and services are Asia and Latin America, where export-related jobs pay 13 to 16 percent more than other American jobs, we don't have a choice; we have to export. To do that, we have to have higher skills, stronger productivity, deeper investment. That's why we have to balance the budget—to keep our interest rates down, our investment up, and to keep the economy going.

We have to give our people the best education in the world. That's why we need the new national school standards. We must open the doors of college to all. We ought to pass the ''GI bill'' for America's workers I've proposed that would give every unemployed and underemployed person a skills grant to use and get into training that he or she needs.

We must continue to expand research and development in both the public and private sectors. And in every opportunity, we have to press forward for more open international trade.

Our administration has concluded more than 200 separate trade agreements, each of which opens someone else's markets wider to American business. We fought for NAFTA, which created the free market with our neighbors, and today, in spite of its economic crisis, our exports to Mexico are up 37 percent over pre-NAFTA levels. We broke 7 years of global gridlock and successfully negotiated the new round of GATT, which has lowered average tariffs on Americans goods around the world by one-third. We have broken down barriers and boosted exports to Japan, up 41 percent since 1993 and 85 percent in the areas where we have negotiated specific trade agreements.

This is a record to build on, not to rest on. When the momentum for open market falters, the world can easily slide backward. And when America falters, our relative position will certainly slide backward. It is unacceptable for us to sit on the sidelines while other nations forge bonds of trade. Only

American leadership can create the prosperity for our people and for the world in the next 50 years. And America cannot lead if we don't act.

And here's what the issue is: Every American President since 1974, Democrat and Republican alike, has had the authority to negotiate new trade agreements, called fast-track negotiating authority, which permits the agreements to be presented in a package to the Congress to be approved up or down. Every time this has been extended with the support of Members of Congress of both parties. That is how we have exercised our most fundamental economic leadership. That authority has expired, and today, I renew my call to Congress to give me the authority to negotiate new trade agreements that will create opportunities for our workers and our businesses in the global economy and will maintain our leadership in creating the kind of world we want the young people who are here in this audience to live in.

We have seen in the past 6 months what a strong trade agreement can do for our people and our businesses. The information technology agreement that we reached with 37 other nations in December will eliminate tariffs and unshackle trade on $500 billion of trade in computers, semiconductors, and telecommunications. This amounts to a $5 billion cut in tariffs on American products exported to other nations. It can lead to hundreds of thousands of high-wage jobs for Americans.

Now, if Congress grants fast track authority, I can use it to open trade in areas where American firms are leading and where our future lies. We lead the world in high technology. In years to come, we must press to tear down barriers that keep that technology, products like computer software, medical equipment, environmental technology out of other markets.

We lead the world in agricultural exports. We have to negotiate trade agreements to open even more markets. We will negotiate a comprehensive free trade agreement with Chile and follow through on our leadership to determine the future of trade in our own hemisphere with our own neighbors, all of whom but one are democracies. And we have to keep them that way and keep them strong.

We will press aggressively to open markets in Asia as well. We must also continue to open opportunities in the world's newest market economies. In particular, I urge Congress to support my new partnership for freedom, to expand trade and investment, entrench free markets in democracy, and promote stability in Russia and the New Independent States.

If we don't seize these opportunities, our competitors surely will. Let me just give you one example. Last year, for the first time ever, Latin American nations had more trade with Europe than the United States. There is no reason to think that others will wait while we sit idle. These nations, in Latin America especially, are our friends; they're our partners. They have done an enormously important thing in moving to freedom and democracy in the last few years all over Central and South America. We dare not let this opportunity pass us by.

I am determined that the new trade agreements we seek will be good for our working people. After all, we've got 11½ million more jobs and 5.2 percent unemployment. We know we can make it good for the American people. And I am determined that they will be good for the environment. More and more, in the future, we will see nations negotiating environmental partnerships for the sake of their economies and the stability of their society and the future of their children.

I have asked the United States Trade Representative, Charlene Barshefsky, to work with Members of Congress of both parties, with labor and business and environmental groups to try to reach consensus on these issues. But let me be clear: There is one consensus we cannot avoid. We cannot shrink from the challenges of leadership in the global economy.

Trade and communications are remaking our world. They're bringing it closer together. They're bringing a revolution in global trade. Because in the long run we know that it's going to happen, we ought to lead it. We have to lead it. And if we do, it will increase our buying power and expand our exports. American workers and businesses, given the chance, can outcompete anyone, and I hope Congress will help me let them do just that.

The larger question we face is as old as America, whether to turn inward or reach outward, whether to fear change or embrace it. Over the past 50 years, over the past 4 years, I believe we've made the choices that have served America well.

Now we face another moment of choice. While we no longer face a single implacable foe, the enemy of our time is inaction. It is so easy to be inactive when things seem to be going well and so easy to believe a new choice will cause more trouble than it will do good. But we did not get where we are today by being inactive or by sitting on the sidelines. The decisions we make in the next few months will set America's course in the world for the next 50 years. We have to make them together, and they must be the right ones.

Thank you very much.

Security Classified Information

[*A participant asked if the President would support legislation proposed by the Commission on Protection and Reduction of Government Secrecy to place restraints on security classification of Government documents and to create a declassification center to report to Congress on progress in that area.*]

The President. Well, first of all, let me say, the short answer to your question is: I think there has to be—we have to do something about it to respond to the commission's report and to respond to the fact that there are too many people who can make too many things classified in the Government. And we are reviewing the report. We have also started conversations with Members of Congress about it. And I'm—we're attempting to fashion what we think is the appropriate response. But let me remind you that I believe that we ought to unearth more documents and not keep so many secrets for so long.

I've worked very hard to open up documents since I've been President. We did it with the human radiation experiments. We have conducted a relentless effort to find out what really happened in the Gulf war, in terms of whether our people were or were not and to what extent exposed to dangerous chemicals. And in any number of other ways, I support the general thrust for the commission's report.

I have asked my staff to study it. I have not received a specific recommendation on the specific points in the report, but generally I think there is too much secrecy in the Government, and I think too many people have too much unfettered discretion just to declare documents secret, and I think that you will see some significant progress coming out of this.

Domestic Chemical Weapons Stockpiles

[*A participant said that his county contains a stockpile of aging chemical weapons and has no adequate highway system for evacuation and pointed out that the disposal schedule has fallen behind. He asked about more intense security of such sites and expansion of highway infrastructure.*]

The President. You've asked me a question no one's ever asked me before, but I can tell you the answer to the first question is, does it make more sense to bring more attention to the country about it? The answer to that is yes if, for no other reason, not just because of what your people may be exposed to but because one of the reasons we decided to destroy all this before I ever came along—my predecessors made that decision, it was the right one—is that you don't want even small amounts of these kinds of chemicals in the wrong hands—can be used for very bad things.

And let me also say—now, on the second question, I will have to go back and see what the facts are and see what we can do to accelerate it. I don't know enough now to give you a sensible answer, but you've asked a good question, and I will get an answer, and I'll get back to you. And let me just make one other point on this. Some of the opponents of the Chemical Weapons Convention say, ''Well, you know, you can't protect everybody against everything.'' Well, if that were the standard, we'd never have any treaties, and we wouldn't pass any laws.

You know, still, some people may be able to cook up chemical weapons in laboratories in their garages. But if you look at what happened to the Japanese people, for example, when the extremist sect unleashed the sarin gas in the Tokyo subway, it was a devastating thing.

Now, maybe they could or could not do that once the chemical weapons regime is fully in force and we have much tighter restrictions on what can cross national lines. But one thing we know for sure: Japan has already ratified this treaty because they have suffered through this, and they know even if somebody who has got a half-cocked idea and a home-baked laboratory can go out and do something terrible like this, there will be fewer incidents like this if we pass the Chemical Weapons Convention.

And I think it's very interesting—a lot of the objections that have been raised to this convention in America were totally dismissed out of hand in Japan, a country that has genuinely suffered from chemicals like this in the hands of terrorists. But that goes back to the question the gentleman from Alabama asked, and it's one of the reasons we want to destroy our stockpiles as quickly as possible, because, in addition to the risks that people in the area are exposed to, we want to minimize the chances that anybody ever can get their hands on any of this for mischievous, evil purposes.

Rogue States and Chemical Weapons Secrets

[*A participant asked the President to respond to the argument that the Chemical Weapons Convention might allow some rogue states access to U.S. chemical weapons secrets and asked if he would be willing to change the treaty.*]

The President. Well, first of all, it is—let me answer the second question first, and then I'll go back. In general, obviously no one country can change the body of a treaty which has already been ratified by other countries; we can't do that, and lots of other countries have ratified it. But every country is empowered to, in effect, attach a set of understandings as to what the treaty means, and as long as they're not plainly inconsistent with the thrust of the document and don't vitiate it, they can go forward. And one of the things we've been doing with a lot of the opponents and the skeptics of the treaty—Senator Helms, for example, and others raised, I think, 30 different questions in the beginning, and we have reached agreement, I believe, in 20 of those 30 areas, and we've offered alternatives that we believe are reasonable in the other areas.

Let me just say for those of you who may not understand this, Iran is a signatory of the—they have ratified the Chemical Weapons Convention. Iraq and Libya have not and will not. The concern is that if a country is attacked by chemical weapons, and they are part of the treaty, that all the rest of us have pledged to do something to help them. And the concern would be—well, what if Iran is attacked by Iraq and the United States and Germany, for example, give them a lot of sophisticated defense technology on chemical weapons, and they turn around and use the chemical weapons against someone else. In other words, if they turned out to have lied about their promise in the treaty. That's the argument.

We have made it clear that, as regards other countries, we will not do anything to give them our technology—not Iran, not anybody—and that's what our response will be, will be limited to helping them deal with the health effects of the attack. We will help people in medical ways and with other things having to do with the health consequences.

So I believe that the compromise we have reached on that, once it becomes fully public and the language is dealt with, will be acceptable to at least most of those who have opposed the treaty on that ground.

Cuba

[*A participant asked about the difference between the U.S. policy of engagement and trade with communist countries in Southeast Asia vis-a-vis the policy of embargo for Cuba, suggesting it would be better to open up Cuba.*]

The President. Well, I think, first of all, as a practical matter, with each of these countries, we do what we think is in our interest and what is most likely to further our interest.

Secondly, the other three countries you have mentioned have not murdered any Americans lately. We had a law that I strongly supported—the Cuba democracy act. I strongly supported it. I thought it was absolutely the right policy. It strengthened the economic embargo but also gave us a chance to open up relations to Cuba and to take care of humanitarian problems, to facilitate travel,

to do all kinds of things. And we were implementing that law. It gave the Executive requisite flexibility.

And in return for the Cuba democracy act, the Castro government illegally shot down two planes and murdered Americans. And so we changed our policy. Congress was outraged. They passed the Helms-Burton law, and I signed it regretfully but not reluctantly. And our policy toward Cuba, therefore today, is one that was dictated by Cuba, not by the United States. And until I see some indication of willingness to change, it's going to be very difficult to persuade me to change our policy. And I would have a different attitude toward China or Vietnam or North Korea if they murdered any Americans. And I would hope you would want me to have a different attitude toward them if they did.

President's Legacy and Aspirations for the Future

[*A participant said his son's class would vote for the first time in 2004 and asked what the President's legacy would be for them and what they could do to prepare themselves for the future.*]

The President. Let me answer the second question first. I think the following things I would recommend to the fifth graders to prepare themselves for the 21st century. Number one, first and foremost, be a good student. Learn all you can. Learn the hard things as well as those that aren't hard for you. And stay out of trouble. Don't do something dumb, like get involved with drugs or alcohol or something that will wreck your life. Learn. Be a good student.

Secondly, get to know people who are your age but who are different from you, people of a different racial or ethnic group, people of a different religion, because you're going to live in the most multi-ethnic, multi-racial, multi-religious democracy in human history. And how we handle that will determine whether the 21st century is also an American century. Still somewhat of an open question, although I'm encouraged about it.

The third thing I would say is, learn as much as you can about the rest of the world, because it will be a smaller world and you will need to know more about it.

And the fourth thing I would say is, start to take the responsibilities of citizenship seriously and find some way—even at the age of ten—to be of service in your community, whether it's helping some student in your school that's not learning as well as he or she should or doing something on the weekends to help people who are unfortunate. I think that we need to build an ethic of citizen service into our young people.

Those are the four things I would advise him to do.

In terms of what I hope the legacy will be, I hope people will look back on this period and say that while I was President, we prepared America for the 21st century basically in three ways: that we preserved the American dream of opportunity for everybody who is willing to work for it; number two, that we preserved America's leadership for peace and freedom and prosperity in the world, and the world is a better place because of it; and number three, that Americans are living in greater harmony with one another as one America because we passionately advocated a respect for people's differences and respect for our shared values, and we made real progress in overcoming these divides and extremist hatreds that have not only weakened our democracy but are virtually destroying countries all around the world.

Or in a more pedestrian way, I hope at least people will say, ''Well, after Bill Clinton was President, at least we had a new set of problems to deal with.'' [*Laughter*]

In 1983, I was in Portland, Maine, at a Governors conference. And the former Senator and former Secretary of State, Edmund Muskie, who recently passed away—a remarkable man—was there. And we were having a visit, and he said, ''You know, I loved being a Governor. In some ways I liked it even more than being a Senator or Secretary of State. I liked running something.''

And I said, ''How did you keep score, Senator Muskie? How did you know whether you had succeeded or not?'' He said, ''I knew I had succeeded if my successor had a new set of problems.'' [*Laughter*] And you think about it, we will always have problems; it's endemic to the human condition and to the nature of life. The way you define progress

is if you get a new set of problems and if you get over it.

And particularly I feel on this whole issue of how we deal with our racial diversity. It's something, of course, that's dominated my whole life because I grew up as a Southerner. But it's a very different issue now. It's more than black Americans and white Americans. The majority of students in the Los Angeles County schools are Hispanic. And there are four school districts in America—four—where there are children who have more than 100 different racial, ethnic, or linguistic backgrounds within the school districts already.

So this is a big deal. And every issue that we debate, whether it's affirmative action or immigration or things that seem only peripherally involved in this, need to be viewed through the prism of how we can preserve one America, the American dream, our shared values, and still accord people real respect and appreciation for their independent heritages. It will be a great, great challenge. It's a challenge that, by the way, I think the newspapers of the country can do a lot to help promote in terms of advancing dialogue, diversifying your own staffs, doing the things that will help America to come to grips with what it means not to be a country with a legacy of slavery and the differences between blacks and whites but to have grafted on to that not only the immigration patterns of the early 20th century but what is happening to us now.

It is really potentially a great thing for America that we are becoming so multi-ethnic at the time the world is becoming so closely tied together. But it's also potentially a powder keg of problems and heartbreak and division and loss. And how we handle it will determine, really—that single question may be the biggest determinant of what we look like 50 years from now and what our position in the world is and what the children of that age will have to look forward to.

National Economy

[*A participant said his area had been devastated by downsizing of the military and asked how the President's trade policies would help revive its citizens' spirits and its economy.*]

The President. Well, let's talk about the downsizing of the military and the trade policy. The trade policy alone won't necessarily revive a place with a stagnant economy, because very often the trade policy increases jobs in the places that are already doing well, because success will build on success. So the only way it can help is if the people in the Mohawk Valley can identify companies that are going to have to expand because of expanding trade and try to get the expansions to locate there.

But what I think is important—and I believe the United States, first of all, has an extra obligation to communities that have been adversely affected by military downsizing. And we have worked very hard to accelerate the rate at which we work with communities that have had military downsizing, to give them back the resources that they can use to rebuild their communities. In many places, we've had a lot of success; in some places we haven't.

Secondly, I think it's important that in areas like yours the United States gives greater economic incentives for new investment to diversify the economy. One of the things that I have asked the Congress to do in my balanced budget plan is to more than double the number of empowerment zones and enterprise communities from the numbers we have now in the new plan, so we can give real incentives for people to invest their money and to create good, stable, long-term jobs in areas with high unemployment rates.

If there's anything else you can think of I can do, I'll be happy to do it. If there's anything we should have done in the defense downsizing to benefit your area that we haven't done, I'll be happy to look into that. But I think the main thing we have to do at the national level is to keep the economy strong and then to create extra incentives for people—like people we're trying to move from welfare to work where I proposed some special incentives—or for places with high unemployment rates, so that we can more uniformly spread economic opportunity.

When you see that America has a 5.2 percent unemployment rate, that's very misleading. We have a lot of States with unemployment rates below 4 percent now. We have within States a lot of communities with un-

employment rates below 5.2 percent. But we still have places with unemployment rates of 7, 8, 9, 10, 12 percent. And so the trick is to create the economic incentives that will even out the investment patterns. And that's what I'm trying to do. And if you can think of anything specific I can do to help you, I hope you'll feel free to contact me and let me know.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:17 p.m. at the J.W. Marriott Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Bob Giles, board president, American Society of Newspaper Editors. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Statement on the District Court Decision Striking Down the Line Item Veto

April 11, 1997

I firmly believe that the lower court has ruled incorrectly in striking down this landmark line item veto legislation. I continue to believe that the line item veto—a power exercised by 43 Governors—is an important tool for the President to strike wasteful spending and tax items from legislation. The last Congress took the right step in enacting this important tool, and I was very pleased to sign it into law.

The Solicitor General has reviewed the decision and has authorized an immediate appeal to the United States Supreme Court. The Solicitor General intends to ask the Supreme Court to expedite the consideration of the appeal and to schedule argument in June so that the case can be decided before the conclusion of the Court's term at the end of June.

This action has my strong support. It is my hope that it will result in an expedited ruling that clears up any confusion.

Proclamation 6987—Pan American Day and Pan American Week, 1997

April 11, 1997

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Each year, we pause to reflect on how the 34 free countries of the Western Hemisphere are inextricably linked to a shared vision through the common thread of democracy, free trade, and mutual respect. This vision can be achieved by continuing our efforts to create a hemispheric free trade area and by working together to uphold democracy, defend human rights, and defeat the scourge of narcotics trafficking.

The citizens of the Americas have made remarkable progress toward the advancement of democratic values and institutions, as well as the creation of integrated markets within which goods may be exchanged freely in a common market of ideas and innovation. Today, every country in our hemisphere—with one exception—has made the promise of democracy a reality. These countries have recognized that representative democracy is essential for guaranteeing the basic human rights of their citizens. Through common effort, we can make this gift of freedom a reality for all.

The United States applauds the people of Paraguay for their great accomplishment in resolving last year's constitutional crisis, and we welcome the central role of the Organization of American States in defending democracy in Paraguay. We commend the people and government of Guatemala for their success in forging a comprehensive peace accord, and we encourage the spirit of reconciliation that has firmly taken root throughout Central America. Americans continue to maintain a special consideration for the people of Haiti as they strive to consolidate their new democracy and set the stage for economic growth. Today, all of us must work together to encourage the one country—Cuba—that has not embraced our com-